/61 cont./

613 128 One may weigh the interest of these investigations of civil status, if I may venture to say it, bearing on each ikhs, its origin, its character. Their most immediate result, one will see some examples of this below, is to reveal an extreme complexity in groups presenting themselves today as units.

/62/ b) Familial archives...

212 613 A second source, no less rich and more propitious for the usual methods of erudition, is offered by the family archives. This society is enamored of the written word. It is indeed rare [415] if each one does not save old papers, put in a "goatskin," tawulkt, or more rarely in a chest. They are rolled in volumen. One slips them into a cylindrical box made from a piece of reed. In this dry climate, preservation is almost indefinite. Still rare for the dates before the beginning of the sixteenth century, these documents become more and more frequent starting from this epoch. The great families preserve them by the thousands. [691] Merely their inventory, drawn up at the time of legal disputes between heirs, sometimes occupies several pages. Inexhaustible contribution to research, for which they reserve the most unhoped-for windfalls. To be sure, it is protected by its difficulties of access and of deciphering. These illegible scrawls are jealously kept from the gaze of others, a fortiori from the outsider and the administrator, for they conceal, if not powers, at least an intimacy that one wants to safeguard against any hold [195] over one. Worn and often faded writing, drawn up in a notarial language studded with barbarisms and idioms, their utilization generally requires the help of scholars of the country, alone capable of interpreting them.

Be that as it may, they constitute an inestimable source on the juridical, hence economic and social life of these olden times. From generation to generation, one can follow there the same names of ikhs and thus cross-check the traditional structure of the group. Beyond these verifications of civil status, they allow retracing quite surely the estate formation of the valley lands during the last two centuries at least. One can draw from

1: Berque--650 Z-5 (ca. 1950) 1955 MW11 Shluh MW11

Pl. V

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Seksawa women

/The complete caption for Pl. V is given on p. 652./

142 Plate V: Seksawa women.
222 (1) Young mother carrying her baby. Note (2) the pectoral,
291 tifilit, and the frontal, tawunza, made from small pieces of
292 silver. This jewelry is most often part of the property of the
301 woman, and of her contribution to the household, jihâz; (3)
302 little girl returning from the spring. The top of the cranium is
415 shaved until the little girl is nubile; (4) ah'wach of young girls:
462 finery of tassels of red silk and of foulards hanging down in the
854 back; (5) the gathering of wild or subspontaneous plants, for the
857 nourishment of man or livestock, constitutes an important part of the activities of the woman.

133 Plate VI: The ground of Agersili.
241 The winding white line at the bottom of the photograph is
312 the present trail, and the mountainous wrinkle toward the top,
487 the one that ends at Awrir Uluggu. Ravines on the right descend from the counterforts of the Tabgurt and end, on the left, at a capture, with a waterfall, called Aguni Wanehkir. The two slopes of the central ravine are notched with terraces. One sees distinctly, at the limit of the irrigation toward the bottom of the photograph, the winding dark line of the great left-bank séguia called Targa n-Tsila or T. Umerdul: after having cleared Agersili, it cuts across the trail (last winding line on the left) in order to go to the side of Ad'erd'ur. On the right bank, the two villages of dry stone, Tawrirt and Agerdayan, are almost confused with the surrounding rocks. The smoothed reliefs at the bottom of the photograph are those of the Chaif Aqqiunan, which are joined to those of the Tasila. At Agersili 27 large irrigated quarters are crowded on a section of ravine of less than two km.